

TWLL-DDU¹

a grubby personalzine from

DAVE LANGFORD

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More than one reason for this.

Kev Smith and I produced DRILKJIS-1 after many delays, and it'll be a while before we get no.2 together. How to fill the yawning gulf of anticlimax, alleviate post-coeditorial depression? Dave Rowe wrote with suggestions for my K column: potted autobiography, said he. It turned out to mean "autobiographies" of other people; still, an idea. DRILKJIS, of course, isn't a zine for personal ramblings (all right, a few crept in: no.1 had many little uncredited bits, all by me); but there existed ~150 rejected covers from D1, the back of each one thickly coated with inviting white space, space begging to be desecrated, defiled, ruthlessly used.

This rejected cover, based on the drawing we later used, was an experiment by the resident artist, my brother Jon. On viewing the results, Kev and I remained massively silent for some hours, by which time Jon's nerve had cracked: he thus became the first to admit his experiment had failed. A different colour in the over-printing---that face---and the course of history might have veered onto the pavement, or further.

Next step was a title. Innate prudery restrained me from using twll d'un, a Welsh idiom which parallels a French one; the final title is science-fictional enough, with due and necessary apologies to (I think) the Leeds U clubzine.

My well-greased and inexorable slide into fandom has lately accelerated. This year came the horrid realisation---via VECTOR, SFINX, EGG, MAYA, BSFAN, K, DRILKJIS and others---dreams of glory and the fatal urge to edit/contribute/LoC had between them eroded my hoped-for ivory tower, which now lay ruined and carious. Conserving my energies to write SF, was I? It didn't show.

"You're becoming fannish," Hazel once wailed, pointedly withdrawing the hem of her garments... So maybe there's another reason for this zine: not so much a further plunge into the ratrace (the vole-race, the kittenrace, the gannetrace...) as one of "those skives to avoid answering all your letters", as some perceptive fellow---no, Don West---said of Grimling Bosch.

Some of that autobiography. Assembling

DRILKJIS in our slow, slow way, we did encounter a few disasters, which were not moaned about in the editorial (a point of policy). But I read once---in an aged copy of Playboy, I think---that if you don't masturbate or copulate you're doomed to wet dreams. Analogously I suppose I shall suffer from terrible nightmares should I fail to utter the traditional moan somewhere, somehow...

Our minions and underlings first struck by duplicating four sheets on foolscap, contrasting interestingly with the remainder on boring old A4, a contrast heightened by the margins, which were so deviously arranged that at one time we seriously considered stapling DRILKJIS at the top. In the end, during our weekend collating-trip to Newport, 100+ copies of pp7/8 were sellotaped to the corresponding pp9/10---concealing the worst marginal error---then the entire zine was guillotined to shape after stapling. Yeuch!

Next day, Kev and Hazel and I packed innumerable bags, intending to visit Oxford and distribute copies. (Bloody Londoners could wait for the One Tun. And everyone else for the second-class mail.) Fred, my car, thought otherwise, and emitted a significant no-ignition-coil silence. Feverishly I pleaded with my mother for a week's loan of her car; reluctantly she yielded; gleefully we went to buy petrol; and two hundred yards later, the exhaust fell off.

My mother's comments were such that Kev was subsequently moved to write her a soothing, conciliatory thank-you-for-having-me letter. And the train to Reading was very, very slow.

This does not expose my soul (are you there, Ian Williams?). My soul is not nice, and I prefer it to remain shrouded. An occasional twitch of the greasy raincoat, dear readers, is the most you should expect.

Yet another possible reason for TWLL-DDU's existence---I never desist from suspicious analysis of my motivations---perhaps I am really such a monster of egotism as to regard the infrequent good lines in my letters as being wasted in mere correspondence?

Next week's salvage of Fred was weird enough. We travelled from Reading in a

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dimly-lit carriage, which grew gradually dimmer as hidden batteries failed. A BR man distributed questionnaires: was it the safety, the reliability, the convenience, the comfort or the low cost of rail travel which had lured us aboard? Squinting through fading twilight, I wrote laboriously CAR-BROKE-DOWN.

Our eyes adjusted to the limit...and there came an explosion of blinding light which seemed a sure token of nuclear disaster. It proved to be Swindon (a merely conventional disaster). I fumbled again through the dark, locating by memory and touch the "additional comments" space on that questionnaire, and slowly scrawled BR-MAKES-YOU-GO-BLIND. Whether the words were legible will forever remain a mystery, unless they track me down. That journey might have induced vast depression if Hazel hadn't been sitting at my side (significant rows of dots, asterisks, etc).

Hazel's left eye is blue, her right eye mainly brown. Note that "mainly": avoiding the cliché of total heterochromia (look it up) occasionally observable in SF, she retains a small blue sector in her brown eye. Most unusual. Lovecraft would have called it eldritch.

I hear BBC radio reported in March that Prof. Heisenberg had died..."somewhere in Germany".

After reclaiming Fred, we went out to the Royal Albert, Newport's principal real-beer pub, with Dai Price---a deranged Welsh person who composes tortuous crosswords. Little coherence ensued...a drunk sang a lot (one night when he went home sober, said a friend, his dog didn't recognise him and it bit him); we talked about the Universe and similar things. Surfacing much later, I recall, as through a wad of cotton-wool darkly, Hazel saying "You're the only person I know who discusses differential topology after five pints."

Later yet, I exhibited the subtle skill of curing hiccoughs by holding one's breath, and repeated this feat at half-hour intervals until consciousness ebbed utterly away.

In the morning, head athrob, I discovered a scrap of paper inscribed "Acid/alkaline liver-salt persons are above drunken Tolkien hole philosophy (2 down)" I prefer to avoid crosswords, sometimes; that was the clue for PHENOMENALISM.

Driving home one night, I saw streams of white ghosts rising quickly through

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the trees; reflected in puddles, the headlight beams were splashing upward as the car moved on. A tiny touch of realism to insert in some story (memo: are Fred's headlights aligned in the same way as those of mundane cars?); the kind of observation at which Bob Shaw is so good.

That train of thought ran daily. Each time I drove along a dark and puddled lane, the reflections flashed up ahead and I remembered "realistic touch: Bob Shaw". More recently---even on dry nights---I gaze into the trees and think without real thought, "Bob Shaw".

I need help. It's become obsessive. I foresee visions of Bob himself perched high in the shadowed branches; in my ultimate decline I'm bound to write "Among the trees the ghostly lights rose smoothly and swiftly, like Bob Shaw"...

Chris Morgan reviewed Michael Coney's HELLO SUMMER, GOODBYE in DRILKJIS---and condemned it roundly. To evade this opprobrium, the DAW edition has a different name: RAX. Don't be fooled.

Chris, by the way, is selling his Mini. Yellow, 14 months old, 12000 miles, £995. Any takers?

Character studies. Rob Holdstock and Andrew Stephenson appeared at an OJSTG meeting last year. Hazel, then President, announced them as Famous People for the benefit of the proles; whereupon Rob strode smilingly forward, hands clasped boxer-fashion above his head in an attitude of triumph. Simultaneously, Andrew covered his anguished face and backed out of the room...

Dud limerick from Novacon:

"There was a young prisoner of Gor
Who toiled on the Angus' top floor.
In twenty-hour shifts
His strong arms pulled lifts
(He expired as he lifted Bob Shaw)."

But Liese Hoare won:

"There once was a monster from Mars
Who was terribly attracted to cars:
An exhaust manifold
Gave him pleasures untold,
But left him with terrible scars."

Meanwhile, at work, where I write most of this rubbish, I recently had to give a talk on electron-accelerators. Just as I was getting into the swing of it and overcoming my terror, the section head indicated that he had a Question. Ha! I was ready for him: all the data about this device were at my fingertips (on a

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piece of paper).

"Where," he said, "is it?"

I looked at the paper. I looked at the table. I looked out of the window. Somewhere in America...? Only a section head would ask a stupid question like that.

LINES TO BE FORGOTTEN:

Rob Holdstock (after much discussion upon the theory of non-linear time): "Have you ever screwed in oscillating time?"

Kev (re DRILKJIS): "I've had a very silly idea for an article. It begins with T, ends in E, and has H in the middle."

VECTOR letter (has to be a typo): "I'll always be grateful to Dan Morgan for his boob on the guitar."

Dai (after hearing of our pest-infested house): "What you need is a house-worming party."

(But as I have said elsewhere, nothing I type contains spelling mistakes. Only a few queer typos, or qwertyuiops as we call them in the trade.)

Too often, before I can respond to fanzines, a review appears and warps my own judgement of the zine. For STOP BREAKING DOWN (Greg Pickersgill's latest)---initial impression, damn good--- I tried to cultivate an impartial mind and write my LoC within the week. A long, gentle rinse in Glenfiddich and my cortex was ready, all responsive and blank, to develop an Impression of SBD which might then be fixed with sprayed-on Alka-Seltzer. At this point, however, Graham Charnock burst through the letterbox and ran his VIBRATOR across the sensitive surface of my mind, polluting the critical environment with non-biodegradable superlatives. (Haha, watch them metaphors get integrated.) It's not fair, he sobbed, it takes me weeks to get out a zine; about 60 weeks for DRILKJIS, for example.

Liese Hoare insists that a Mancon bidder said last year that "there will be a fixed charge for each room...you can sleep ten to a room if you like...".

As the "inflation-proof" prices distended, such pleasant thoughts moved further from reality. Vaster and more cruel than any hotel's, the computerised, cross-referenced files of Brian Robinson were perverted to the ends of the Thought Police.

Martin Hoare asked for a single, wishing to sleep in contact with Liese (rooms are single or "twin"---the latter seemingly manufactured by shifting beds, leav-

ing from Martin's viewpoint a superfluous room and a superfluous bed); the request was queried, repeated; and auto-bureaucracy declared that even if they went without food, this was Not Good Enough. The actual letter, complete with injunctions to "reply immediately", warns that delay may preclude bookings for anyone at all (followed by: "!!!"). No doubt someone is only following orders, but with 1000 rooms supposedly available, that last sounds a bit disingenuous. Mass booking at Real Hotels is rumoured (the Brum group and others)...cause or effect?

I was asked, "Would you let us know who the second banquet ticket is for, please?": could this be the sinister checking-up once more at work? I've no idea---this coincided with my periodic financial crisis (it periodically ebbs, for one day only, on the first of each month)---so after scant days of toying with witty/sardonic/obnoxious replies, I cancelled the tickets.

If the committee bursts into my room at 5am with cries of "Just checking!", I shall accuse them all of attempted rape. And the nine people on the floor will back me up.

The end of this tiny trial-balloon approaches. Being weary of blobs in brackets, spaces for secret code-letters, and sinister annotations upon the mailing label, I leave response to conscience and memory. TWLL-DDU arrives with ruthless whimsicality of time and place; but ignore it for long enough and it'll go away.

I have a plan for reducing the hate mail sent by readers with staple-shredded fingertips (a real problem: I bled symbolically all over SCABBY TALES 2 yesterday): if all else fails and I can't afford envelopes, then the C*v*1 S*rv*c* will provide. If only someone would do as much for VIBRATOR, GOBLIN'S GROTTO, CHECKPOINT, PARKER'S PATCH and the like...

Last bit of news...Tully Zetford made it to the big time in February, and was remaindered at Woolies. Next, the Hugo.

I'll be moving soon, but letters will still be forwarded from BOUNDARY HALL, TADLEY, BASINGSTOKE, HANTS., RG26 6QD. Parcel bombs may be sent direct to Superintendent Fairweather (c/o the Oxford police), who will understand.

So, bye-bye. Or as Horatio doubtless said of Hamlet's ornate death-bed:

"Good night-suite, Prince."